Milena Aziza Rampoldi

From the Shattered Mirror to the Colorful Mosaic – Female Writing Therapy Against Islamophobia

PROMOSAIK LAPH

The result of my self-therapy is the recognition that these shattered mirror remains are parts of my experience, of my life, of myself and my feminine primordial power.

These pieces are exactly the ones which made me strong. They are colorful because I painted them like mosaic stones. I no longer mirror myself in them. They are no longer my you, but my "I".

They are no longer my enemy, but my experience, which is part of my inner self.

Their edges no longer cut into the skin of my hands, because they are embedded in the clay.

This second part of the "Writing Therapy" project of ProMosaik LAPH deals with the broken mirror parts of Muslim women who have experienced islamophobia and discrimination by the police, the authorities and other people in their society. These women have learnt how to cry, fall to the ground, perceive the gravity of the fall, accept this fall, and then get right back up to struggle.

These episodes are fragments narrated by Muslim women who have entrusted me with their stories to be included in this booklet.

Milena Rampoldi, Istanbul, October 13, 2025

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to all Muslim women who have come into contact with Islamophobia. I would like to call on all of them to continue to fight for their rights in the future. I also dedicate this book to all non-Muslims who show moral courage when they experience Islamophobia in their society.

A special thanks to my invisible love, Samir Tahadjrit, for his motivating cooperation in this project.

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Introduction

It's always said: Speak up and you'll feel better! I would rather say: Write up and get to know yourself. In the path of the Muslim woman to herself I do not see a path to happiness, but rather the steep path to self-knowledge and self-confidence that the entire experience, which also includes discrimination and Islamophobia, is and remains a part of myself, because it defines and identifies me as a person and as a Muslim woman.

I do not need any therapy that extinguishes or transfigures my experience, because I accept my experience and turn the shattered mirror into a colorful mosaic, a mosaic of opposites, polyphony, cacophony and dialectics within myself.

This path is a broad, wide and perspective-rich path that does not run as steeply as it may seem at the beginning, because I do not see myself as the victim. I'm not a victim. But nevertheless, my life is a

shattered mirror, as long as I see this shattered mirror and leave it there as it is, in front of me.

The turning point is quite simple: I do not meditate in front of the shattered mirror, but collect all the mirror remains, take a clay tablet and press all these mirror remains into this clay tablet before it becomes hard.

The result of my self-therapy is the recognition that these shattered mirror remains are parts of my experience, of my life, of myself and my feminine primordial power. These pieces are exactly the ones which made me strong. They are colorful because I painted them like mosaic stones. I no longer mirror myself in them. They are no longer my you, but my "I". They are no longer my enemy, but my experience, which is part of my inner self. Their edges no longer cut into the skin of my hands, because they are embedded in the clay.

These mirror parts, which no longer cut, have now become an essential part of my strong personality as a Muslim woman who lives in a self-determined way. I can't tell you why they are just these mirror parts,

because they are the result of a brainstorming session I made with myself. Perhaps I chose these fragments because they express how different discrimination and Islamophobia against Muslim women can be.

These fragments are personal experiences and experiences of other women on their difficult life path towards female strength and resilience. They are the experiences of unbroken women to whom I have had the honor to listen to and who have entrusted their life story to me so that I could include it as a fragment in this booklet.

They are the experiences of women who have learnt how to cry, to fall to the ground, to perceive the gravity of their fall, to accept it and then get back up right away. I would like to call the parts of the shattered mirror fragments, because they belong to a whole, to me and to the other women who entrusted me with these stories to include them in this book.

These fragments do not mix, they do not blur, they do not cancel each other out, because they lie there, indented in the clay. And each fragment bears the

name of a woman. And each fragment is personal. But here, pressed in the clay, the individual fragments do not lose their color. Because they actually confess color and female identity.

These fragments say: All right, I have been discriminated because I am a Muslim woman. This discrimination is part of me. All right, I was insulted because I'm a Muslim woman. This discrimination is part of me. All right, I was mistreated because I'm a Muslim woman. This discrimination is part of me.

I'm not a hero because I've gone through this. But I'm also not a victim because I've gone through this. I am only myself with my personal experience, which has made me strong because I am not broken by it and still go through life full of pride and self-confidence.

The fragments included in this book are followed by a review of the Islamophobic film "Submission" by Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Theo van Gogh, which for me is a prime example of Islamophobic and/or misogynistic thinking.

"Submission" is a paradigm of the prevailing Islamophobia, which is mainly directed against Muslim women.

Muslim women are discriminated in the name of Western women's rights and at the same time Muslim women are labeled as pure objects of Muslim men's violence against women. On both sides, the Muslim woman within the meaning of Edward Said's idea of objectifying the Orient is on one hand an object of racist thoughts and on the other hand of misogynistic violence.

In every woman, however, there is a spell that is the result of an extraordinary healing process. World-wide, the woman shines like a ruby and reflects like a crystal the brutality of this world.

Fragment 1: Fatima and Mariam

We had had a long day, filled with work and then rounded off with our commitment to charitable projects.

It was a warm summer evening. We thought it would do us good to eat an ice cream and then just sit on a bench in the old city to talk about our lives and our dreams.

After the ice cream parlor, we looked for a metal bench on the town hall square and sat down there. We talked about different topics. And one of the issues was also our condition as visible Muslim women in a pretty much Islamophobic society.

But since it was our own society that rejected us due to our conversion to Islam, we almost saw it as a duty to fight for the rights of all Muslim women, especially migrant women, through visibility and communication.

Our struggle was aimed above all at women, who experience discrimination and Islamophobia in one, not only because of their religion, but also because of their skin color or their low social position.

While we were sitting there, various passers-by gave us bad looks. There were also people who were almost disgusted by us and looked at us that way. But we didn't think much of it, as these glances have been defining our everyday lives for years now by making them very challenging.

At some point, two young men came towards us. They looked like two buddies going out together on Saturday night to turn on girls or play pool.

They addressed us cheekily and practically wanted to turn us on.

The concept of the unattainability and inaccessibility of Muslim women had probably turned them on. I replied to them by asking them in a friendly way to leave us alone.

One of them said a sentence that cut my heart to pieces while I was sitting on the metal bench and

actually wanted to talk to a sister in Islam about our common dreams.

I don't know how my Muslim sister, who was sitting next to me on the metal bench, was doing at that moment. But I think that also for her the sentence one of the two young men said was a border crossing that could not be tolerated.

Translated from Italian, the sentence the young man dared to say was approximately the following:

"You will eventually kneel before us to receive the honor of giving us a blow job."

I called the police and asked the patrol to come to the town hall square immediately.

The young men left the place very quickly, but the police saw them running away. The two policemen of the patrol said we should quickly get into the back seats of their Alfa Romeo Giulietta and ride along. And they added that they would catch these two guys. Then we could come to the guard to lodge a complaint for severe insult and religious discrimination.

The story seemed unbelievable to us. We felt really respected by the police, who had handled our visible presentation of the Islamic religion very differently in other cases.

Unfortunately, the patrol car did not manage to catch the two young men, as they ran into an alley that was not passable by car. Although we chased them, in the end, they still managed to disappear into other alleys like rabbits. It was also a little dark.

Then one of the two policemen proposed to do a round in a few pubs, which are typical places of such people, who have an "underground" tolerance for other faiths and as little respect for women as these two men do.

We agreed and thanked the two policemen again for their constructive support.

Now we have experienced looks that we would never have noticed in our life without this police operation. The contempt in the eyes of the people we met in these pubs, as we scoured the crowd to see if the two Italian guys were anywhere to be found, exceeded

our perceptual capacity. In the eyes of these young, often already drunk girls, boys and adults, we saw not only contempt, but also true disgust, repulsion, hatred and much more.

After three pubs, one of the policemen broke off the operation. I was relieved on the one hand, but on the other I was still thinking about what I should have done better. Actually, I should have jumped out of the Alfa Romeo Giulietta faster to follow the two guys in the dark alley. However, I could hardly jump out of a police car that was still driving.

In the end, I couldn't think of anything better than thanking the two policemen together with my Muslim sister and wishing them a successful night patrol. With that nightlife, I can hardly imagine the successes of the two men, but I hoped, of course, that this black night would not directly break their commitment and their moral courage.

Fragment 2: Aziza

I was a young woman, full of energy. I loved my Muslim abaya and my Muslim headscarf. In principle, I didn't care what people thought or felt about me. I just tried to put as much dynamism as possible into every single day, in order to be able to say in the evening: Mashallah, I have achieved something since I woke up today and before I do my evening prayer to then fall asleep.

And this day was an authentic and intense day. We carried out a successful project with our association. We then all moved from our stand towards a pizzeria to end the evening there. I don't remember the entire group, but I still remember some people.

One was the gynecologist who had supervised the medical project in the Muslim war country in the Caucasus in cooperation with our association. There was also his young girlfriend, who was still studying and was interested in psychology and political

sciences. Then there was a Jewish lady, unfortunately a little too Zionist for my taste and for her intelligence. The others were colleagues of the association and people we knew from school, and who just wanted to eat a pizza and had come along for a purely gastronomic reason.

With my girlfriend, I was the only Muslim in the group. Politically, of course, the group was united by the common denominator of socialist world citizenship in the fight against racism, migration policy of the Italian state, war and militarism.

After we had crossed some alleys of the old town, we reached the pizzeria, which I had just ironically suggested, because I had not eaten badly there a few times before, but when I was not yet a Muslim.

We entered the restaurant and the Jewish comrade-in-arms said we should sit down directly at the large table in the middle of the restaurant. By using that table, the entire group had space enough and did not have to divide into small groups and occupy different tables.

I thought the suggestion was great, answered in the affirmative and made a sign to the waiter that he should please come to us to take the orders.

However, the waiter didn't respond at all. Then our physician said ironically: "If they don't listen to a woman, I'll take care of it." I did not like his comment, but unfortunately what he said corresponded to the bitter truth. Since when the middle-aged doctor waved at the waiter, the waiter was on the spot in no time.

We all ordered our pizza and drinks right away.

After the waiter left our table with our orders and then turned to the kitchen, the boss whispered to him. It looked like the two had a disagreement. In the meantime, I stared at the street from the restaurant. I was a little tired at that point. In fact, from our table positioned in the center of the restaurant, you could directly see the street and the entrance area of the pizzeria. I was sitting in the spotlight, so to speak, and only later on I understood why this situation had to change.

When the waiter and his boss seemed to have ended their disagreement, the boss came to our table and asked us in a friendly and quiet tone if we could sit at the table at the bottom left of the toilets.

Except for the Jewish lady and me, no one understood what the issue was about. It was about the business-damaging visibility of a Muslim woman, who could be perceived so well from the street and from the entrance of the pizzeria that one could still decide to go to another pizzeria for reasons that had to do with the rejection of a religion regarded as terrorist.

The Jewish lady suggested that we should move to another restaurant. She was fed up with this anti-religious narrative. Because Jewish women like her would have the same problem if they wore a tichel and therefore stood out. She said: Either we eat here at this central table or we go. I thought differently and maybe I was wrong. For the sake of peace, I suggested the following: We should change the table, but at the same time make it clear to the boss that we knew what was going on here. I was always influenced by

my pedagogical conviction that people would eventually understand something of what I was trying to show them.

The Jewish lady said that this would not exactly be the bravest solution but would also be acceptable. She came to the counter with me and we explained to the boss that our intelligence quotient was not lower due to our religious affiliation and that we did not like what was going on here. However, since we were not the only ones who belonged to this group and it had been a long day, we would also accept eating pizza near the toilet but of course would never visit this place again in the future.

Indeed, the entire situation was futile to the boss. He was silent and tried to get rid of us. I had never thought at the time that I would ever be grateful to a Zionist who also gave reasons to justify Netanyahu's settler troops.

It was the year of the murder of the nearly blind Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, killed in his wheelchair in front of a mosque after his

morning prayer. But I have been appreciating the moral courage of this Jewish lady, regardless of Yassin's murder, to this day.

Fragment 3: Rashida

I would like to thank you for including the episode taken from my biography on Islamophobia in this booklet. It is important to admit that we usually bottle up and repress these episodes, which are already hundreds in a short period of time. These are episodes we do not even tell ourselves. Before I wrote this story for this booklet, I had to let the story go through my head a few times, visually and acoustically, to tell it first to myself.

I was at the airport in Rome. I had just come back from Cairo. The flight had been exhausting and before landing, a storm had raged in the clouds of southern Italy. But I thought: We have almost arrived, so this stressing situation is about to end. I just have to show my EU passport quickly and will certainly be waved right through. I'm back home, in my country.

I wore a black jallaba that I had purchased in a boutique in Cairo. My headscarf was purple and

matched perfectly with the floral motifs embroidered on the jallaba. I went through the metal detector as usual. Interestingly, I wasn't asked to raise my hands like a criminal or anything, which made me very happy.

I enjoyed the gravity acting on my arms, which I didn't need to lift up. As it was the case for any trip after 9/11, I had prepared myself well. I had no metal on my body. So the metal detector kept silent. Unfortunately, the young Italian policeman was not silent and said that I still had metal on my body somewhere. He grabbed my headscarf and pulled out the colorful pin that held two layers of the headscarf together. I turned my back to him and reattached my headscarf by adding one layer under another at the neck so that the headscarf would stay on my head, as the term itself expresses so nicely.

I then turned around and asked the state official to give me back my pin, since he had checked it. Due to the small dimensions, I do not think that checking a pin required further steps, I meant ironically accor-

ding to my style of a Muslim woman who should sometimes keep her mouth shut.

Irony aside, at this point, I simply thought the police officer should just give the pin back. So I could use the confiscated pin directly again to weld the two headscarf layers together and have my peace of mind.

But the police officer laughed stupidly at me and said: "I'll keep this pin here. It was confiscated and stays here." Of course, I found the whole thing absolutely outrageous, but I didn't want any more escalation on the evening after the storm in the southern Italian sky. So, I kept silent. Shrouded in my silence, I left the place and went to the exit of the airport of the Eternal City, the capital of my country, where fascism had probably not been forgotten.

Fascism lives in metamorphosis. Fascism is not black, but colorful. Fascism has many colors, such as those of the pins with which one attaches the Muslim headscarf to the head.

Fragment 4: Leyla

There are two cities of Paris. There is the French Paris, the Paris of the Louvre Museum, the Notre Dame Cathedral, the Palace of Versailles and the gardens near the Eiffel Tower. And there is the second Paris of migrants, the Paris of exclusion, of slave jobs, of the Muslim diaspora and at the same time of foreign criminality.

I was there, in the center of Paris II. I was invited to a French convert who lived there with her family. I should spend my month of Ramadan there. In this context, I was also to be paired with a brother, who then told me his political life story. However, his marriage offer did not fail because of his political biography but because I could not appreciate his pedagogical approach when it came to his two children.

But in this fragment, which is part of this book on Islamophobia or Islam hatred, depending on what you

want to call this intolerable phenomenon, I do not want to talk about my resistance to marriage to a political activist in exile, but about the Islamophobia and/or Islam hatred that I experienced when I drove out of the Arab neighborhood to shop at Carrefour together with the brother and his two children.

With his German Audi we went to the Carrefour parking space. The parking spots were almost all occupied, but then we discovered a spot at the bottom right in an infinite row of French small cars made by Renault and Peugeot. The activist's two children, who were 6 and 5 at the time, a super cute girl and her protective brother, were sitting in the back of the car. As a good German, the brother blinked, of course, and then drove to the last empty parking spot.

However, he didn't quite succeed because another small car accelerated and practically tried to "steal" the parking spot from us, even though we had obviously been there before and therefore had the right to this miserable parking spot, which was still

free, so that we could go shopping like ordinary citizens, as all French people in the secular republic do. With the difference that we were Muslims. But Muslims also park their vehicles, Muslims also buy food at Carrefour and Muslims also pay with their credit cards and then pack the bags in their cars to go back to the ghetto of Paris II instead of driving back to the typical French bourgeois neighborhoods.

The two cars faced each other like a duel in a Clint Eastwood cowboy movie. Neither the brother nor the Frenchman moved from the spot. I thought it was, as always, a macho problem or something like that. So, I thought that I should leave the car and talk to the Frenchman to make him understand that we were indeed there before him and therefore we and not him deserved the right to occupy that miserable parking spot.

My black dress and my hijab fluttered in the wind. The two children sitting in the back seats did probably not know what I was doing when I just knocked on this

Frenchman's car window so that he could lower it to listen to what I had to tell him.

I said to him very clearly that we had arrived before him and thus had the right to drive into the parking spot. He should make room for us to pull into the parking spot. I asked him very diplomatically and politely to put the car in reverse and drive "out of our sunlight".

Strangely, the Frenchman then did what I had asked for which totally surprised me. I thought there had to be an aftermath. It can't be that this man just gives up and drives away. He looked at me stupidly, from top to bottom. Then I said to him: "Have you never seen a Muslim woman before?" And he replied: "A European never, but dirty Arabs like the one in the car yes..." I told him to shut up and keep his Front National slogans to himself. I turned around and sat in the Audi. And, finally, we reached our longed-for, miserable parking spot. When the brother then ironically asked me how I had persuaded the Frenchman to drive away and what he had said to me

last, I remained silent like a grave and kept the teaching to myself.

There is Islamophobia against converts. But this is only stage 1 of Islamophobia. The true racist Islamophobia is that of level 2. Because "Arab" is considered a dirty word in France.

Fragment 5: Iman

I just reached Munich airport to take my plane to the Middle East. I was supposed to fly via Doha in Qatar to the southern Arabian Peninsula. I was a bit tired from the train ride to Munich.

I was already wearing like in Doha, so as not to stand out. The only missing element was the face veil, which I would have attached only before our landing in Doha, as the ladies from the Gulf do when they take their plane back home from Europe.

Suddenly, the women on the plane do no longer show their faces. This is a completely new and extremely strange experience even for a woman, when almost all female passengers simultaneously make their smiles disappear behind their niqab.

But we weren't on the plane yet. We still had to go through the metal detector and baggage and passport control. I acted well and diligently like a model citizen of the Republic. Under my hijab, I had

my headphones on so that I could listen to some music by Yusuf Islam before things got serious at the metal detector.

It had not even been two years since the 9/11 attack. After 9/11, our lives in Southern and Central Europe had become harder and harder as visible Muslim women, but we didn't want to give up. We were also networked which means that we could exchange experiences of discrimination. We told each other how the police treated us, how people looked at us, what insults Islamophobes in society gave us, etc. That helped us. We didn't want to give up this fight for the freedom to wear our headscarves.

Our trembling desert flower of the early years as converts transformed into a tough desert cactus that stood up to all who blocked its rocky path.

A female airport employee approached me and told me to raise my hands. I did what she had ordered because I would have had no chance to draw her attention to the fact that such an order is only issued in an apartheid state. I already knew that I was a

second-class or perhaps even a third-class citizen and would remain as such if fascism did not disappear from the European soil.

So, I raised my arms up and wrapped myself in silence. Yusuf Islam's music was still running in secrecy. By the way, I couldn't turn off the music because my arms were pointing toward the sky. The woman paraded me around. I was supposed to walk through the metal detector with those raised arms, which I did in silence. The metal detector kept silent, because I had no metal on my body. Even my shoes didn't have metal buckles. I also didn't have a belt with a metal buckle. So theoretically everything was good. In practice, however, the situation looked completely different.

I then regained my civil rights to take my arms down again. That was a great pleasure for me.

But I knew that this wasn't the whole story. Since the gaze of that woman was extremely hostile. She did indeed order me to take off my headscarf. I smiled at her and said yes by adding that she had to find a place,

behind a locked door, without forcing me to take my headscarf off my head in public.

Now she asked me to go into a small room which was completely black. The access to that room was via a black curtain. I stepped into the room and took my headscarf off my head. After that, something unexpected happened. The woman fumbled in my hair.

At some point, I asked her what she was looking for between my hair. She replied: "You never know what you're smuggling onto an airplane, you Burka women..." I kept silent. I waited for the completion of the head massage, which massaged my brain rather than my scalp.

When I finally left this little black room, I asked myself the question: What would the situation look like if I were a black Muslim woman in Tel Aviv? I did not want to paint this scene.

Fragment 6: Saida

I walked out of the city hospital in my town towards the parking space with my friend Maryam and her fiancé Majid. Maryam's car was standing there in the sun. It was evening now. We had been in the hospital room of Majid's brother, who had received a diagnosis of diabetes II and was therefore to spend a few days in hospital.

We had some things to discuss because Majid hadn't understood everything the doctor had explained and needed our support as interpreters. I translated some things into French for him. Maryam calmed him down and said that everything would soon be all right with his brother inshallah. We would also visit his brother while he was driving around Europe as a truck driver for the next few weeks.

I think we sat in the car for at least half an hour and didn't leave because we were talking. I was sitting on the back. Suddenly, the white back of a hand tapped

my car window in the back seat. I looked to the right and recognized a uniform. The man was not an Italian policeman, because in that case he would be dressed in blue, but a carabinieri in a black uniform.

I opened the window of the car and asked the man what this was all about and why he was knocking on the door of our car. I told him that the car was Maryam's car. And I added that in this parking spot we were not prohibited from stopping and that we had the right to talk freely here.

The multiculturalism of the Ummah had probably traumatized him. The Polish convert sat in front with her steel blue eyes. Next to here, a Moroccan man from the Meknès area and in the back seat an Italian woman whose skin was white like the milk he bought from the supermarket.

The carabinieri asked me to get out of the car, which I did directly. I thought to myself: "Better, the carabinieri asks me... I am linguistically more quick-witted and ethnically less conspicuous..." Maryam would

have done the same so as not to endanger Majid or expose him to unnecessary police violence.

When I got out, the carabinieri asked me to put my hands on the car, which I did. But then I saw a body search in front of my eyes. I had such a premonition. So I thought to myself: "Saida, fight back now..." I couldn't think of anything better than asking Maryam to take my EU passport out of my pocket, as my hands were not free and stuck to the vehicle.

Maryam did me this favor and handed my Italian passport to the carabinieri. I hate having to use my privileged passport to free myself from police brutality. But I didn't want this man to do me a body search while my hands lay motionless on the vehicle. Another detail comes to mind, although the story dates back years. The roof of the vehicle was hot from the sun, which had warmed the metal for hours while we had been in Majid's brother's sick room. I wanted to get out of there.

Of course, the situation was also embarrassing because a passerby could have recognized me. We

lived in a small town. Thus, the situation could also have been detrimental to the business if you were seen with your hands on the vehicle by any people. When the carabiniere saw the EU passport, he withdrew and thought about leaving the body search. I took my last civil courage out of my body and asked him: "What if I was a headscarf-wearer from Sudan without EU passport? Would you search me from top to bottom or what?" He ironically replied, "You're not a Sudanese. You're an Italian..." I was silent and saw the black woman with a headscarf in front of me, while his hands touched her body to search it and was sad, just sad about this damn reality of Islamophobia, which in the end destroys the very life of the women whom the West wants to protect from so-called "misogynistic" Islam by taking away their headscarf.

Fragment 7: Alia

I was in Istanbul when the January 12, 2016 terrorist attack was committed. A suicide bomber killed twelve German tourists in Istanbul's Old City, not far from my children's school. The situation was extremely tense. As a convert, you feel bad about it. Brothers who pose as Muslims kill innocent people. Everything that Islam stands for is abused. "*La ikrah fi-din*" is a clear message. And this message means freedom of religion.

Since I know a little about geopolitics and am well-read in the matter, on that black January 12, 2016, I knew exactly that other attacks would follow. Another completely brainwashed brother would plan and pull off another attack. For terrorism is always going on. Terrorism is an expression of violence, stupidity and lack of empathy. Terrorism creates a groundless fear, because there is no protection

against stupidity, as Bonhoeffer describes it in his letter from prison.

The Islamic State on the other side of the eastern border of the NATO power Turkey was too close to us. This invented state, which had its un-Islamic narrative, called itself "Islamic" and simply turned Islam into its opposite. However, this invented terror state touched our lives.

Other men would come and confuse jihad with kamikaze thinking. And these men, who misunderstand Islam, would then again harm us as visible Muslim women wearing headscarves. For, in the end, we are the victims of Islamophobia because we are sexualized. We are sexualized on the streets and then double-discriminated against as sexually inaccessible. It's about political sexuality. The headscarf ban means sexualization of Islam and focusses on the woman who is at the front because she wears a visible religious symbol.

And that's exactly how it all happened. After January 12, 2016, a teacher left school and returned to

Europe. He said he was afraid of terrorism. But that is precisely the goal of terrorist attacks: People should be afraid of an unforeseeable violence that will take place somewhere, at some point, whenever the next guy misunderstands Islam and blows himself up.

In the event of an attack on a police bus on June 7, 2016, in the old city of Istanbul, at least eleven people were killed and 35 injured. This is another example of the terrorist violence of a state that calls itself Islamic without being an Islamic state.

I got my kids out of school more often in the months after the first ISIS murderous attack. The topic of conversation in front of the school had for days been the Islamic terrorism of the Islamic State, which had now also affected the Turkish secular republic.

I kept silent because it hardly made sense to explain things to people that they wouldn't understand anyway.

Two women who were waiting next to me for their children, who were about to leave school, were just talking about the terrorist attack again. They said that

another attack will follow and that the Italian state should protect the children from it in school. I answered: "Sorry if I interfere. But the Italian state can hardly protect children from terrorism on the open road in a metropolis of this size."

Then one of the two women answered me roughly with the following words, which then really thinned me into the deepest silence:

"That's easy for you to say. You're one of them. No ISIS terrorist would attack someone who looks like you. When he sees you, he will blow himself up somewhere else so as not to catch you."

Fragment 8: Sarah

I was at my daughter's music school. The course was very nice. It offered the parents the opportunity to go through a great and innovative experience in the field of early musical education together with their toddlers.

So I decided to take part. I loved music and was glad to share my passion for music with my three-year-old daughter.

I came to class and was the only Muslim woman wearing a headscarf in this German village. Some women stared at me because I came across as weird, since I spoke perfect German, while others found me repulsive.

I tried to use my enchanting smile to de-escalate the situation a little. I also partially succeeded at the beginning of the course. The teacher was on my side. I noticed that and of course I was very happy about it. I knew I could have counted on her.

After some exercises and playing in pairs with our own children, we should then form a circle. The teacher said we should all shake hands. I stood there and waited for one of the women to take my hand. But since this did not happen and I was the only one who was not given a hand, the teacher stood next to me and extended her hand to me. But since I had two hands, my right hand was still available.

I stood there thinking about what to do. An alternative would have been to take your own child in your arms and leave the room.

But the solution sounded too simple to my ears and would have insulted my moral courage. Since no woman moved to take my hand, my only hope was in the supportive words of the teacher, who then really came. At some point, after a few infinite seconds of silence, she said:

"Is there a volunteer who can still hold out a hand?"

At some point, the situation of one of the women was too dull, and she came over and held out her hand to

me. Finally, the circle closed, and the early musical education lesson took its course.

Fragment 9: Aisha

Finally, it was winter and the Christmas market opened. This Christmas market was special because it was a Christmas market for associations that were given the great chance to sell products to finance their projects.

And we had a registered association for international cooperation in our town. And like all other small associations, we also needed financial resources for our projects. I was the only woman with a headscarf in this association and at the same time its manager.

We had received a donation of hundreds of plush toys by a nice shop in the old town, including numerous cute sheep in different colors. We wanted to sell them on our stand to finance an association for people with disabilities as well as an initiative for women's health in a Muslim war zone.

We all agreed that the stuffed animals would work out great. The plush toys were inexpensive and

anyone could have gotten a plush toy against a small donation. In addition, these sheep looked so sweet that you could not even say "no" to them. I was extremely optimistic and sure that I would sell every last one of these stuffed animals or give them away in exchange for donations.

But then a fellow association member got in my way, so to speak. She turned to me a bit shyly and wanted to tell me something without directly saying what was going on. Since my name is not Cassandra and I do not run an oracle in Delphi and do not want to open one in the future but am the president of an association in which people talk openly about their own views, plans and ideas, I replied to her with the words: "Sorry, we have no time to waste here. If you want to say something, go ahead... I'm here... you can tell me anything you want."

The girl then made a comparison between a woman wearing a Muslim headscarf and a person with a disability who has to sit lame in a wheelchair. The comparison hit me like a bolt of lightning.

I immediately replied that she should refrain from insulting people with disabilities and compare their discrimination with that of Muslim women wearing headscarves. For a person who is in a wheelchair cannot stand up. But a person wearing a headscarf can go to a country where the headscarf is welcome, since Allah's world, as it is said in the Qur'an, is "wide".

In the end, the girl told me what this comparison was all about. She said I was damaging to business and couldn't sell these stuffed animals in public at a Christmas market while wearing a Muslim headscarf.

I said, "Okay, I'll stay at home... okay, I'll withdraw."

But when the others couldn't manage to sell these sweet sheep with a little wit and charm, I received a call to see if I could come and take matters into my own hands.

I was looking forward to the 180-degree turnaround of my association members and started three long and successful sales days, on which hundreds of stuffed animals left our stand. Old people, young

couples and families with children were fascinated by these wonderful sheep and their shiny eyes and bought them or donated money to take such a sheep home.

Fragment 10: Farida

It was a great day. The high politics had called. Our development aid projects have since gone on to earn a strong reputation. We had been a little bit present in the media.

Thus, one of us should introduce herself to the governor. Of course, that was not my thing to introduce myself as president of the association to the governor, but I would have done it if that had served the cause. I would have even worn business clothes if it had served our struggle for justice and women's rights. There are also plain elegant silk headscarves that fit perfectly over a light blue Indian cotton hood.

The war zone in which we worked with our projects needed new schools because the former schools had been bombed during the war. We didn't have that much money in the coffers of the association. Thus, a financial "injection" from the political world would

have been just perfect at this point. I was already preparing myself aesthetically and mentally for this meeting with the governor.

But of course, my association friends got cold feet before the fateful day of my meeting with the governor. They said it would be enough if the foreign woman from the war zone showed up with the Islamic headscarf. The compatriot with the second headscarf would be too much of a good thing, they added.

In the end, for the sake of peace, I renounced my appearance to apply for funding for the school and let another founder of the association take the lead. She then attended the meeting with the politician. I can't say whether she profiled herself. For the meeting took place behind closed doors in the palace of the governor. I was not there but waited outside to ask the colleague directly how the meeting had gone. She said everything went great and the governor would consider funding to build the school.

This was a great success for us, which was to be celebrated over a coffee at my home.

The next day, an article appeared around the governor's meeting with our association. The cynical thing about the matter was that the text of the article introduced me as a Muslim convert and headscarf-wearer and put my name under a photo with the governor and the Muslim activist, which did not depict me next to her, but the colleague of the association who had represented me at the meeting with the governor to avoid me showing up with my headscarf.

Fragment 11: Hanan

There were problems at school. My daughter was severely bullied. Her new pair of jeans, which her father had bought her to avoid his daughter looking like a poor Muslim migrant from a half-Turkish immigrant family, was probably a too nice eye-catcher. These pants were full of glittering embroidery and looked cool. They would certainly have been enjoyed by the German upper-class children.

These great pants were thrown into the water for three weeks in a row during gym class. The child was practically unable to put on her normal pants in the first elementary school after physical education and, since the normal pants were wet, the girl had to stay in the gymnastics pants until school was over and she was picked up by the Bulgarian Muslim babysitter with a headscarf because her mother was sitting in the office.

After a brief talk with my then husband, who had already experienced some exceeding waves of Islamophobia in the Federal Republic, my decision was clear. Three times is three times too many. "I will call the school and make an appointment with the principal", I announced.

So on the morning of the appointment, we went to school in proper, civilian clothes and were received by the principal. My ex was wearing an art tie and an elegant suit. Of course, with his steel-blue eyes and his friendly and non-invasive hustle and bustle, he was very well received by the female principal. We sat down in her office and hoped for a quick resolution of the matter. This bullying against our daughter had to stop. The little girl, who also did not know enough German to defend herself, should not find her pants wet at the end of the physical education class, but dry. That's all we both wanted. We didn't want the culprit to be held accountable. We just wanted this bullying not to happen again.

I thought my demand was extremely minimalist and was sure that this minimalism inshallah would help me achieve my goal of protecting my daughter. This is all I wanted.

My ex, on the other hand, went a few steps further. The principal was to find out who had committed this act on three subsequent days of the physical education class and had escaped because he had not been caught three times in a row. My ex drew the principal's attention to the fact that it took a certain amount of effort and time to get a pair of pants so wet that it drips. So someone must have seen the perpetrator.

My ex thus urged the rector to find the culprits and hold them accountable so that such attacks against migrant children would no longer be repeated in school.

The principal only had eyes for him. My minimalist demand had been forgotten. I had no chance against his blue eyes and his Monet's tie.

At the very end of the conversation, when the principal thought she would do everything in her power to clear things up, she finally looked at me. I was so naive and happy about it, because I thought I might be able to exchange a few words with her after all.

But then her words hit me like a lightning in the blue sky, when she literally said: "But you have to know how to dress..."

So the bullying against my daughter was my fault. I would urge people to act in this way because I wear a Muslim headscarf. With this lesson, I returned home and yearned for a new life in a Muslim country.

Fragment 12: Bilqis

My husband and I went to the pediatrician. Since we were entrepreneurs, we had private health insurance to get ahead faster.

We had simply forgotten about a medical check-up for our baby. I know this wasn't supposed to happen, but it had already happened. I thought that an apology to the doctor would be enough. My apology on the phone was accepted. After that, I was given a friendly farewell. But when I became "visible" in the medical office as a headscarf-wearer, my excuse was no longer good enough.

I tried to understand the issue without immediately thinking of discrimination associated with Islam or bringing it up.

I approached the medical office employee again and asked her not to report this mistake to the Children's and Youth Welfare Office. But she insisted. I then gave up at some point and left the place after the

completion of the new visit. My husband and I forgot about the incident until not one morning two ladies stood at our door. I opened the front door for them. They introduced themselves as employees of the Child and Youth Welfare Office and told us that they had come to our home to check the child's family circumstances. Of course, I immediately understood that the medical office had really pulled it off in the end and had reported us to the Children's and Youth Welfare Office as bad parents.

To avoid getting into even more trouble, naivety and honesty seemed to me the best way to confront these women. I invited them to see the child's room. They checked the bed and the toys. They then looked at the beds of the other two children.

I then wanted to offer them a coffee in the kitchen, but they both declined it directly and stopped in a standing position which embarrassed me because I wanted to sit down and then at some point did.

Then the two women started to ask questions from a "catalogue". Since my answers sounded rather

strange to them, after their visit, I had to prove them by transmitting additional documents. But the documents could be handed in later, they said.

The first question was whether the "mother-in-law" was healthy enough to take care of the children. But the reality was completely different: The woman sitting at the table was a Bulgarian sister in Islam who worked for me. She helped me in the household and with the children while I was sitting in the office. The office was located just below the apartment.

The second question was as follows: Can you manage the rent payments by yourself, or do you need support from the German state? The reality was completely different: I lived in a fully paid-off house, had a company and everything that lay around was paid off without taking any loans.

At some point, no further questions came up. The two officials simply could not believe that a woman with a headscarf owned a house with a shop in Germany and even employed a domestic help to provide for and educate three children with her support. But the

pediatrician will also soon learn the whole story. I hope that my story will stop him from blacking out the next headscarf entrepreneur at the German Children's and Youth Welfare Office.

Fragment 13: Nibras

Venice airport, sometime during the EU migration crisis. I queued at the gate to catch my plane to Istanbul. I just had held a conference in northern Italy about Islam, Muslims and integration. As always, the headscarf was discussed as the main topic of Islam. The European discourse on Islam in the European public sphere is only about the stigmatization of the visible Muslim woman, who is present on the European streets with a headscarf, and about the sexualization of religion. I do not perceive anything else. It was my first visit to my European homeland after years in the Middle East. And now I took my plane to go back "home" to the Middle East.

In front of me, there were 3 Israelis, two women and a man, probably parents with their daughter. They had the blue passport with the menorah in their hands. I put my hand luggage next to me on the floor and thought about my life when one of the women

turned around and looked at me from top to bottom. From the "headscarf to the shoes", so to speak.

I didn't think anything of it at first, but the contempt in her eyes was already fierce. She reminded me a little of the Zionist Italian of Jewish origin, who also had an Israeli passport, and had denounced me since my conversion as member of an "animal religion" when I showed up with a headscarf. She had worked in an office with my father for years and then moved to her new Zionist homeland, where she still lives and incites against Palestinians.

But let us go back to Venice airport. One of the two women, the younger one, then stepped out of the queue, turned to an employee of the airline and said: "I'm not flying on the same plane with this woman".

The man answered her bluntly: "I'm sorry, but this woman is a passenger like any other, so we can't send her off the plane".

The woman angrily returned to the queue.

My only hope now was that we wouldn't be sitting one next to another once we got on the plane. My

hope was disappointed, but then I understood what Allah was trying to tell me.

I sat behind the three Israeli citizens. They ate kosher and I ate halal. And Jewish kosher food is halal for Muslims. If it weren't for Zionism, we'd be drinking mint tea together, for sure.

Fragment 14: Sanabil

Actually, I was only supposed to tell one episode of my life in which I was discriminated against because of my Muslim headscarf. But I will quote some Islamophobic comments that were said by my family members in the short period of time when I lived with a headscarf with them, until I then left the city and the country forever.

The first episode that comes to my mind was a few years ago, when I returned from the Arabian Peninsula with a Muslim headscarf and visited my parents in their mountain village, where of course I also showed up with my headscarf.

While we were about to enter the courtyard of the house to reach our parents' apartment, my younger brother said: "Do not come here too often with these clothes, and do not bring girlfriends with headscarves, otherwise the property will be devalued".

The second episode happened in the same year when a Sudanese brother came to our apartment to discuss something. I invited him in, but my father was half asleep and drunk, lying on the sofa in the entrance. So I refrained from inviting the brother to the kitchen to drink a coffee together. I rather considered sneaking past the father with a short "ciao" to take the brother to the library where there was a small table by the window. There I could have served him the coffee. Of course, something came up and a scream reached us from the living room: "The headscarf-women who go in and out here were probably not enough, now also "negroes" come into our house".

I looked at the brother and asked him, "Do you want to go or stay?" He smiled and said, "Sister, I'm staying." That day I understood that Islamophobia goes a tad worse when black skin is involved.

A few years later we sat abroad, in the Middle East, in a cafeteria on the Mediterranean Sea, drinking a lemonade together. My mother had just told me

about my sister's sexual life. As a devout Catholic who believed in marriage as a permanent institution, she could not understand the whole thing.

Then I thought I'd dare the question and asked her: "Which is worse, a daughter with a Muslim headscarf, a convert to Islam out of conviction, or a daughter who lives with a woman?"

Then, quite unexpectedly, the following answer came: "I prefer the headscarf... it is more normal". This answer has been accompanying me for years.

My mother had indeed given me her blessing so many years after my emigration. Those words had healed something in my soul hit by Islamophobia ... albeit very late.

Fragment 15: Rahma

We had just taken our plane from Istanbul to Latvia and then via Riga to Helsinki. We got off in Riga. Transit area. Of course, this meant hand luggage check, metal detector and then passport control. The usual sort of thing. I had three children with me. I was the only passenger wearing a headscarf on the whole plane. In front of me, there was only a man who was "ethnically" classified as a Middle Eastern Muslim. Indeed, they separated us from the rest of the passengers. He stood in front of me and went through the metal detector. After having gone through the metal detector, the man was asked to follow the Latvian police. I didn't know where the police took this man, but that scene helped me prepare myself psychologically to what will happen to me. I looked at my children and asked them to go through the metal detector and then wait for me further down with their

hand luggage and stay quite calm without moving from the spot.

The blonde woman asked me to pass the metal detector. The metal detector was silent. So, everything was good. Then the woman said, "We'll do it again." I was silent and did what she told me to do. The metal detector also remained silent during the second pass. The woman was speechless and thought about a new plan.

The other female officer, standing behind the tape on which the hand luggage was checked, asked me if this was my laptop. I answered in the affirmative and she hit the laptop on the tape. I kept silent. Then her hand went into my daughter's carry-on to confiscate a deodorant pen. The daughter saw the whole scene from the spot where she was waiting for me. I tried to send her a look that silently asked her not to do anything. I would then buy her a new deodorant pen right at the airport in Helsinki.

I then made my way from the metal detector to the passport control. Again, I asked the children to just

stay calm. Our passports were quickly checked and returned. A child dared to touch the door handle. This door would have allowed us to get out and then take our plane from Riga to Helsinki. The policeman stopped her with a cold order, I guess in Latvian. I called out to the child, "Take your hand off the door handle and wait for me."

I introduced my EU passport with the headscarf photo under the window into his cabin and waited. The male officer looked at the screen for a few minutes, sent me a few glances and I then told him, "Please, there are three kids with me..." Then he lifted his gaze from the screen and gave me my passport back. I dared to touch the door handle and then asked the children to slowly pass the door so that we could catch our next plane.

Fragment 16: Dua

In the morning, we travelled from Kuopio to Tampere. We wanted to reach the cosmopolitan city and spend the night there to complete our visit the following day. There were great museums in the city, and we wanted to see them.

After visiting the park, we looked for a halal restaurant for lunch and then went for a spin in the center. On a street, two girls were sitting on the pavement, performing dance moves. Probably this was the result of a crack withdrawal. Next to them, there was a small group of men standing there. They were probably also drug addicts, who talked and cursed. I can barely speak Finnish, but you always hear some swear words when you're new to living abroad.

I said to the children, we should get away from this group a little. The children had never seen a withdrawal scene. I would have loved to spare the child-

ren the whole thing, but we were already here and couldn't undo what we had seen.

So I just asked the kids to move on and not look at the two girls. I also moved away a little from the right side of the street into the central part of it. The street was almost empty. Except for the two girls and the men who were talking, there was practically no one.

Then I heard a Finnish sentence that sounded something like this: "Painu vittuun Syyriaan... huora." I only understood "vittuun", which was something like "fuck" and then the word Syria with the suffix that meant I should practically "piss myself off" to Syria. Until then, it was still okay, but then "you bitch" was really too much for me. I then simply translated the words into German via Deepl.com. It sounded similar to the German word "Hure" which in English means "bitch". At that moment, this question crossed my mind: Is it really good to understand a language? How should I learn the language of a country where I am not welcome?

I saved myself from the stress of explaining things to these people that they probably wouldn't have understood and walked off with my kids.

The fact that my moral courage had reached the absolute zero point did not exactly make me proud of myself... But there are moments of civil courage and moments of silence in life...

Review of the film "*Submission*" by Ayaan Hirsi Ali: the stigmatization of the Muslim woman

Unfortunately, I must confess to having watched this film several times to write this bitter review. For me, Ayaan Hirsi Ali is not an activist, but a woman playing with the fire. She knows the Muslim world and knows what such films can trigger in the minds of many Muslims and how much hatred can be stoked against Islamophobes. She also knows exactly how much she is dragging Muslim women into the mud with this sexualized depiction of Islamic prayer.

The impetus for writing this review of the shocking film by the Somali atheist, women's rights activist and politician Ayyan Hirsi Ali (born 1969) was given to me by the ninth anniversary of the murder of the Dutch regisseur Theo van Gogh of 2 November 2004.

In addition, in the months leading up to the ninth anniversary of the brutal murder of Van Gogh on the open street in Amsterdam by a Muslim, I had also

dealt with Geert Wilders' PVV and its discussion of the supposed failure of the multicultural and religion-free society, which represented an ideal model of integration in Europe.

Dutch politician Geert Wilders has just gone so far as to call for the destruction of Islam, which he calls the "green plague".

The whole political escalation began with the film by Theo van Gogh, although it was not his own film at all and he only did the Somali atheist and politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali a favor as one of her "intellectual relatives", as sociologist Geert Mak calls him in his book "The Murder of Theo van Gogh".

In my opinion, it is difficult to compare cynical remarks such as "goatfucker" with such a well-thought-out script that no longer criticizes, smiles, looks at cynically, but just stigmatizes the Muslim woman and thus completely excludes her from Western society.

I do not think that the film attacks Islam, but rather degrades, sexualizes and makes the Muslim woman a woman who cannot defend herself.

Here in the following, I would like to introduce a brief description of the beginning of the film, which anyone can then watch in full here if he/she really wants to subject himself/herself to it as we say in German:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGtQvGGY4S4

At the beginning of the short film, the female protagonist recites the first sura from the Qur'an, entitled "The Opening" (*al-Fatiha*), which is part of Islamic prayer and contains the following wording:

"In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate. All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Lord of the Day of Judgment. You alone we serve, and with You alone we seek refuge. Guide us on the straight path, the path of those whom you have favored; Not the (path) of those who earn your anger nor of those who go astray."

I can explain the opening of the prayer dress of this praying woman in the film in two ways:

a) as a challenge or provocation against the sexual morality of Islam in general or

b) as an allusion to the first sura of the Qur'an, which is called in Arabic "*Fatiha*", which means "opening" in English.

This second explanation sounds plausible in view of the fact that in another part of the film, in which the woman squats in prayer, insight is again given into her intimate body parts in order to "open" them, so to speak, in the sense of an exposure.

Finally, my opinion on the so-called "husband", who does what you get to see in the film.

It is the image of a person who does not trust his wife and thinks badly about her and wants to oppress her emotionally and psychologically by accusing her of not being grateful. The husband thus uses a moral virtue of Islam and manipulates it in order to morally blackmail his believing wife.

I see in this description a psychopath with paranoia rather than one of the many Muslim men living around the globe. However, there are places that women can turn to if they find themselves in such a situation.

In Muslim countries, we must fight taboos and give a voice to the beaten women, tightening laws so that violent men can be excluded from family and society. We also urgently need to explore the relationship between violence against women in Muslim societies and Islamophobia against Muslim women in Western societies.

This is a twofold and brutal discrimination against a woman who believes in Allah and wears her headscarf in the diaspora out of conviction because she wants to maintain her visibility as a Muslim. She is marginalized by a society that always praises itself for its commitment to women's rights. The hypocrisy of the Western media and the double standard when it comes to Muslim women wearing headscarves stink to high heaven.

I would like to leave this in the room as a final comment on the above-mentioned fragments of this colorful mosaic.

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